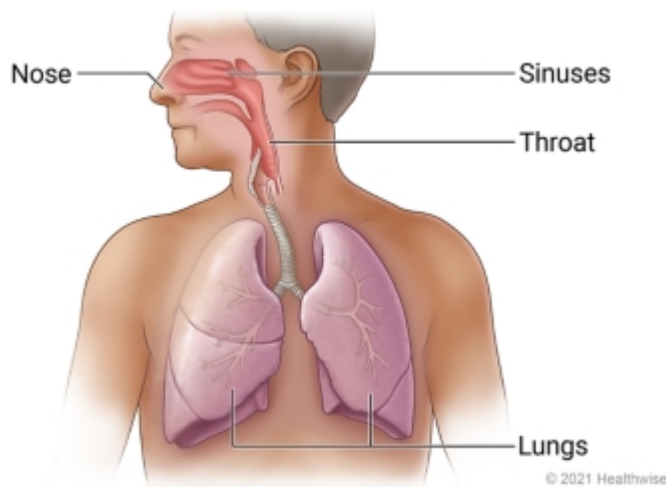


Learning About COPD and Upper Respiratory Infections



What are upper respiratory infections?

An upper respiratory infection, also called a URI, is an infection of the nose, sinuses, or throat. Viruses or bacteria can cause URIs. Colds, the flu, and sinusitis are examples of URIs. These infections are spread by coughs, sneezes, and close contact.

How do these infections affect COPD?

Colds, the flu, and other upper respiratory infections can make COPD symptoms worse. These symptoms include having too much mucus in your lungs, coughing, and being short of breath.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- To prevent dehydration, drink plenty of fluids. Choose water and other clear liquids until you feel better. If you have kidney, heart, or liver disease and have to limit fluids, talk with your doctor before you increase the amount of fluids you drink.
- Ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter pain medicine, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve). Be safe with medicines. Read and follow all instructions on the label. No one younger than 20 should take aspirin. It has been linked to Reye syndrome, a serious illness.
- Be careful when taking over-the-counter cold or flu medicines and Tylenol at the same time. Many of these medicines have acetaminophen, which is Tylenol. Read the labels to make sure that you are not taking more than the recommended dose. Too much acetaminophen (Tylenol) can be harmful.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Use saline (saltwater) nasal washes to help keep your nasal passages open and wash out mucus and allergens. You can buy saline nose sprays at a grocery store or drugstore. Follow the instructions on the package. Or you can make your own at home. Add 1 teaspoon of non-iodized salt

and 1 teaspoon of baking soda to 2 cups of distilled or boiled and cooled water. Fill a squeeze bottle or neti pot with the nasal wash. Then put the tip into your nostril, and lean over the sink. With your mouth open, gently squirt the liquid. Repeat on the other side.

- Use a vaporizer or humidifier to add moisture to your bedroom. Follow the instructions for cleaning the machine.
- Do not smoke or allow others to smoke around you. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good.

How can you help prevent upper respiratory infections?

There are several things you can do to help prevent colds and other upper respiratory infections (URIs):

- Wash your hands often.
- Be extra careful in winter and when you're around people with colds.
- Keep your hands away from your face. Your nose, eyes, and mouth are the most likely places for germs to enter your body.
- Eat well, and get plenty of sleep and exercise. This keeps your body strong so it can fight URIs.
- Don't smoke. Smoking makes it easier to get a URI and harder to get rid of one.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/PatientEd>

Enter **V912** in the search box to learn more about "**Learning About COPD and Upper Respiratory Infections**".

©2006-2022 Healthwise, Incorporated.

This care instruction is for use with your licensed healthcare professional. If you have questions about a medical condition or this instruction, always ask your healthcare professional. Healthwise, Incorporated disclaims any warranty or liability for your use of this information.